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THE  
RISE AND PROGRESS  
OF THE  
SCANDINAVIAN POETRY.

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Geo. Walter March 1786 - 6.



REGISTERED

OF THE

SCANDINAVIAN



THE  
R I S E  
AND  
P R O G R E S S  
OF THE  
S C A N D I N A V I A N  
P O E T R Y.

A P O E M,  
I N T W O P A R T S.

BY  
MR. JERNINGHAM.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

**T**HE materials that form the first part of the following Poem are taken from the Scandinavian poetics, *The EDDA*! In the remarks on the third fable of the *Edda* are these words, ‘a powerful Being had with his breath animated the drops out of which the first giant was formed. This Being, whom the *Edda* affects not to name, was entirely distinct from Odin, who had his birth long after the formation of the giant *Ymir*.’—This first agent, or genius, whom the *Edda* affects not to name, is supposed in the following Poem to create from his own immediate power, the system of the Scaldic mythology. As it would have been impossible to introduce the whole system without running into a tedious enumeration; the principal features of it are only retained (sufficient it is presumed) to give some idea of the character of the northern poetry. Among other omissions the reader will find that no mention is made of *Gimlé*,  
the



*the mansion of bliss that was appropriated to the reception of the virtuous, nor of Nastrande, the abode of the impious; these places not being supposed to exist in their full extent till the general destruction of the world; whereas the hall of Odin, and the caves of Hela, were peculiarly the Elysium, and the Tartarus of the Runic poetry: they are perpetually referred to in the ancient songs of the Scalds, and the wild system of these contrasted abodes seems well calculated to encourage that spirit of war and enterprize which runs through the whole Scandinavian minstrelsey.*

*Some expressions taken from the Edda may appear obscure without an explanation: in the language of the Scalds the world is stiled the great vessel that floats on the ages.—The rainbow the bridge of the gods.—To drink the blood of friendship, alludes to a ceremony performed by two warriors when they enter into an alliance of friendship: they made incisions in their arms or breast, and tasting each other's blood, they mutually swore,  
that*



ADVERTISEMENT. iii

*that the death of the first of them who fell in battle should not pass unrevenged.*

*To celebrate the mass of weapons was to fight against the Christians, whose religious sentiments the Scandinavians held in contempt, as thinking them adverse to the spirit of war.*

*The Valkeries are a female troop whom Odin sends to the field of battle upon invisible steeds; their function is to choose such as are destined to slaughter, and conduct their spirits to the Paradise of the Brave.*

*Fenris is a large wolf, who is to break his chains at the general conflagration, and to swallow the sun.*



# THE HISTORY OF THE

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**W**HEN urg'd by Destiny th' eventful year  
Sail'd thro' the portal of the northern sphere,  
Of Scandinavia the rude Genius rose,  
His breast deep-lab'ring with creation's throes:  
Thrice o'er his head a pow'rful wand he whirl'd,  
Then call'd to life a new Poetic world.

First thro' the yawning waves that roar'd around,  
Uprising flow from out the gulph profound,  
Amidst the fury of the beating storm  
The giant Ymir heav'd his horrid form.

A

Now



Now on the stormy cloud the rainbow glows,  
Where gay Diversity her colouring throws.  
Beyond the sun the Pow'r now cast his eyes,  
And bad the splendid city Asgard rise,  
Obedient to the loud creative call  
She rises, circled with a crystal wall,  
Her saphire mansions crown'd with opal tow'rs,  
O'er which the Pow'r a flood of radiance show'rs.

Now a more daring task the Genius plann'd,  
He seiz'd the rapid lightning in his hand,  
And as around the broken rays he flung,  
From the fall'n spires the gods of Asgard sprung.

See the dread Ash exalt its lofty head,  
And o'er a wide extent its umbrage shed:  
There twelve of Asgard's gods in close divan  
Sit in strict judgment on the deeds of man:  
Amidst the waving boughs enthron'd on high  
An eagle sends around his watchful eye.

Three



Three virgin forms in snowy vests array'd  
 Stand in the deep recesses of the shade,  
 The rich endowments of whose radiant mind  
 Are by the Pow'r to different acts consign'd.  
 He gives to thee sage Urda to restore  
 The splendid deeds of times that are no more,  
 And (faithful as the echo to the sound)  
 Repeat transactions that were once renown'd.  
 Clear to thy view Vernandi are unfurl'd,  
 The various scenes that fill the extensive world.  
 To thee, O Skulda, the dread pow'r is giv'n,  
 To read the counsels in the breast of heav'n;  
 With daring forecast pierce th' abyss of time,  
 And (utt'ring first some strange mysterious rhyme)  
 Proclaim which babe, when rear'd to warlike form,  
 Shall o'er his country roll destruction's storm;  
 And which, directed to a better fate,  
 Shall rise the pride and pillar of the state.

Next



Next at the awful Pow'r's commanding call,  
Arose to view great Odin's festive hall!  
Engrav'd with sun-beams on the crystal gate  
Appear'd—

—*Here they reside in splendid state,  
Who, as they slept in death, reclin'd their head  
On valor's bier, the battle's rugged bed,  
Who to the blifs (th' intrepid claim) aspir'd,  
Who welcom'd pain, and with a smile expir'd.*

Now as the Genius waves his hallow'd hand  
The Valkeries appear, a female band,  
Prompt to the storm of lances to repair  
On viewless steeds to scour the fields of air;  
Mark as they hover o'er the crowded plain  
The chosen chiefs, the death-devoted train.

The Pow'r now form'd the coward's dwelling place,  
The seat of pain, and mansion of disgrace:

Deep



Deep under earth he fix'd the drear abode,  
 Thro' which the rueful stream of anguish flow'd;  
 Loud roar the surges thro' the Gulph profound,  
 While cavern'd echoes murmur back the sound.  
 Close at the gate sat Death's terrific maid,  
 Her meagre form in sable weeds array'd;  
 A wreath of living snakes entwine her head,  
 And thus with shrilling voice the spectre said:  
 'Haste to my caves, ye impotent of heart,  
 'Who meanly shrink from valor's daring part,  
 'Ye too, who ling'ring on with feeble breath,  
 'Crept thro' the languor of old age to death.'

See on the horrid battle's bleeding plain  
 The raven-brood rejoicing o'er the slain,  
 Yet then in vain they gorge the grateful food,  
 Death smites them at the dire repast of blood;  
 When lo! their pinions to the wond'ring view  
 Combining, into one vast texture grew;



The gory heads conjoin'd in one dread fold,  
 Around the frame a grisly margin roll'd:  
 Now self-upborn the fable banner flings,  
 Bold to the wind its wide expanding wings;  
 Exalt, the genius cries, thy plumes on high,  
 Wave thy dark signal to the warrior's eye;  
 Th' intrepid youth beneath thy magic shade  
 Thro' slaughter'd heaps to victory shall wade\*.

Now from a rock on which the genius stood,  
 He mark'd below a slowly-waving wood,  
 Then rais'd his awful voice—Hail hallow'd gloom,  
 (Where Thought is rear'd and Fancy decks her plume)  
 Who hold'st within thy vast sequester'd bow'r  
 A numerous train, that wait the rip'ning hour:  
 Relinquish thy charge, yield to demanding time,  
 The living fathers of the Runic rhyme.

\* Tho' the Raven-banner is not mentioned in the Edda, it is of great antiquity; it was supposed to be endued with some magical power, and to insure success.



[ II ]

Swift at his word the ancient fire survey'd  
 Tumultuous rushing from the solemn shade,  
 Arm'd with the pow'rful harp an ardent throng,  
 The mighty founders of the northern song.  
 'Twas then the Pow'r resum'd—' Ye chosen band,  
 ' At nature's furnace take your faithful stand:  
 ' There forge the verse amidst the fiercest glow,  
 ' And thence the thunderbolts of genius throw;  
 ' Rouze, rouze the tyrant from his flatt'ring dream,  
 ' Full at his vices wield the daring theme,  
 ' Till o'er his cheek shall flash intruding shame,  
 ' That blushing dawn of virtue's rising flame.

' Now on the bosom of the list'ning youth  
 ' Impress, engrave the sacred form of truth;  
 ' Bid them, as varying life unfolds to view,  
 ' Be still to all her scenes to honor true:  
 ' True to the man on friendship's list enroll'd  
 ' Th' entrusted secret of his soul untold:

' Woe



' Woe to that chief, and blasted be his fame,  
 ' Whose mean foul chills affection's holy flame;  
 ' Forgetting that he once, with zeal impress'd,  
 ' Drank the pure drops that flow'd from friendship's breast.

' Now to the realm ye hallow'd bards impart  
 ' This truth, and touch with joy the human heart,  
 ' In man's too transient perishable frame  
 ' A glowing unabating fire proclaim,  
 ' Which as that frame lies mould'ring into clay,  
 ' Shall thro' th' encircling ruin burst its way :  
 ' Thus when a torrent of impetuous rain  
 ' Drowns the low nest that trusted to the plain;  
 ' High soars the bird beyond Destruction's flow,  
 ' And owns no kindred with the wreck below.

' Now o'er some stately tomb's dim entrance bend,  
 ' And from the daring harp unerring send  
 ' (As from the founding bow with vigor sped)  
 ' The darts of harmony that wake the dead.

' Be



' Be too of prophecy the dreadful lords,  
 ' And strike the solemn deep mysterious chords;  
 ' Skill'd to reveal futurity's dark laws,  
 ' Inforce the song with many an awful pause.  
 ' In sounds that terrify the soul disclose  
 ' (Veil'd in the womb of time) destructive woes:  
 ' Say whirlwinds shall provoke the roaring main,  
 ' Say stars shall drop like glitt'ring gems of rain:  
 ' Say Fenris, bursting from his time-worn chains,  
 ' Shall bear wild horror thro' the Runic plains;  
 ' Doom'd while the course of havoc he shall run,  
 ' With jaws outstretch'd to rend the falling sun.  
 ' Say the gigantic ship, the floating world,  
 ' Shall on the iron rock of ruin hurl'd,  
 ' Sink—like a dream that rushing from the mind,  
 ' Leaves not a glimm'ring of its pomp behind.  
 ' Ye bold Enthusiasts join the warlike train,  
 ' When true to fame they seek the hostile plain;  
 ' Bid the loud harp delight the valiant throng,  
 ' And add the forceful eloquence of song.

C

' Thinn'd



' Thinn'd of his numbers, mark the struggling chief  
 ' Encircled close, and sever'd from relief :  
 ' Now strike the cheering harp—'tis heard no more,  
 ' Lost in the conflict's wild encreasing roar.  
 ' Yet strike again, yet strike the note profound,  
 ' I to the chief will waft th' inspiring sound ;  
 ' Till thro' the pressure of the battle's storm,  
 ' He o'er the slain a rugged path shall form.  
 ' Thus on the main when frozen fragments fail,  
 ' And with huge mounds oppose the giant whale ;  
 ' The ocean's lord enrag'd at the delay,  
 ' Thro' stubborn, crashing ice-rocks bursts his way.

' Now round some death-struck chief in silence throng,  
 ' While thus he breathes his own historic song—  
*Tho' gasp'd with wounds, unwounded is my fame,*  
*In the war's field I chac'd the flying game ;*  
*Wrapt in the jealous veil of ling'ring night,*  
*Did we not chide the time's reluctant flight?*

*Did*



*Did not our voices hail the morning ray,  
Shouting the matins of th' important day?  
When foreign streamers glitter'd to our view,  
How swift our weapons from the scabbards flew.  
'Twas joy to see the riven-helmets fly,  
'Twas joy to swell confusion's thund'ring cry,  
'Twas joy to see (extending all around)  
The hostile banners spread the lowly ground;  
Methought the Danish field thus mantled o'er,  
Heav'd conscious of the gorgeous robe it wore.*

‘ Thus as the chief shall mitigate his pain \*,  
‘ With choral voice relieve the pausing strain :  
‘ Now, now again your soothing tones suspend,  
‘ And o'er the dying chief attentive bend.

*Rush'd we not forth at valor's daring call,  
To crush the forces of the Christian Gaul?*

\* See the notes the reverend Mr. Johnstone has added to his translation of the death-song of Lodbroc.

*Rush'd*



*Rush'd we not forth in terrible attire,  
To celebrate the mass of war a length'ning quire?  
Our glitt'ring swords, impatient of the fight,  
Were the dread relics that adorn'd the rite.  
But agony returns—my fading breath  
Denies expression to the song of death.  
Farewell—ye battle-fisters hover nigh,  
Receive your prize—and waft my soul on high.*

' Now ere he sinks beneath the blow of fate,  
' Reveal the honors of his future state;  
' Where to his wond'ring vision shall expand,  
' Adorn'd with heroes, a refulgent land.

' Ye glowing masters of the Scaldic song\*,  
' Still other pow'rful gifts to you belong:

\* In the first rude ages rocks and trees supplied the materials for writing, and on them were inscribed the rudiments of that art: the trees thus marked were held in veneration, and were even believed to inclose some supernatural agent.

' The



' The lofty pine that meets the mountain gale,  
 ' Th' expanding oak that crowns the lowly vale,  
 ' Shall as your fingers touch the furrow'd rind,  
 ' Display the treasures of the musing mind :  
 ' There by the voice of whisp'ring nature call'd,  
 ' In future times shall stand the youthful Scald,  
 ' There shall he meditate the Runic store,  
 ' There woo the science of the tuneful lore ;  
 ' There view the tree with speechless wonder fraught,  
 ' Whose womb mysterious bears the poet's thought ;  
 ' There (from the busy world's incessant din)  
 ' Inhale the breathings of the Pow'r within.

' Enough—the Pow'r I now bestow enjoy,  
 ' In Virtue's cause the forceful harp employ :  
 ' Go forth, ye glorious conquerors of the mind,  
 ' Achieve the hallow'd task to you assign'd :  
 ' Applaud the valiant, and the base controul,  
 ' Disturb, exalt, enchant the human soul.'

D

Thus



Thus to his minstrels spoke the awful pow'r—  
 The conscious Scalds avow th' inspiring hour :  
 And now dividing into many a band,  
 Strew their wild poetry o'er all the land :  
 So while descending with resistless tide,  
 The snow-flood hurries down the mountain's side,  
 The sun bright-sailing midst his ardent beams,  
 Melts the rude havoc into various streams ;  
 Which rushing thro' the naked vales below,  
 Rouze vegetation as they roughly flow ;  
 Till a new scene o'er spreads the teeming earth,  
 And smiling Nature hails the summer's birth.

END OF THE FIRST PART.



## ADVERTISEMENT.

*THE temple of Upsal was destroy'd by Ingo 1075—  
a Christian cathedral was erected on its ruins four-  
score years after. At the introduction of Christianity,  
the interposition of angels and the appearance of ghosts  
grew familiar to the Scandinavian poetry, which was  
afterwards enriched by allegories, and by the accession of  
new images which flowed to it, through various channels,  
particularly from the East. See Richardson's Dissert-  
ation.*

*When colleges were founded, and the general atten-  
tion was directed to classical learning, the wild concep-  
tions of the Scaldic minstrels gradually fell into disuse.  
—This short Analysis contains the subject of the fol-  
lowing pages.*



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PART THE SECOND.

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**T**HE gaudy dome to pagan worship known,  
By Ingo's zealous hand at length o'erthrown;  
O'er the long-reaching ruins still rever'd,  
The Gothic pile its form majestic rear'd.  
The fretted columns of ambitious height,  
And bulk enormous, fix th' astonish'd sight;  
And as they boldly rise on either hand,  
Like kindred giants in dread phalanx stand:  
While thro' the isles that stretch a length'ning way,  
The umber'd windows shed terrific day.

E

Amidst



Amidst the wonders of the new abode,  
 The bursting organ seem'd itself a god!  
 Diffusing its magnificence of sound,  
 And sending to the soul its note profound.

Th' admiring numbers next the altar view'd,  
 Crown'd with the image of the holy Rood,  
 Displaying the sublime awards of Heav'n,  
 A Bleeding Deity—A world forgiv'n.—  
 The awe-struck bards stood bound as with a spell,  
 While from their grasp the chill'd harp lifeless fell :  
 The lowly valley, and the hill sublime,  
 Echoed no more the battle-breathing rhyme.  
 Thus an eclipse by terror's hand imbrown'd,  
 Wrapt in concealment the poetic ground ;  
 But time at length the hov'ring veil withdrew,  
 When all the gorgeous scenery burst to view.  
 The Genius joy'd to see his ancient store  
 Enrich'd with many a form unknown before.

The



The clouds recede, while op'ning skies display,  
Th' angelic hierarchy in proud array :  
Rank rising above rank in order due,  
The splendid confistory meets his view.

Now spirits of another form appear,  
And from the yawning graves their shadows rear !  
Here glides a ghastly shade intent to shed  
A scene of terror round the murd'rer's bed.  
There midst the solemn silence of the night,  
Beneath the half-veil'd moon's reluctant light ;  
The shade of buried Denmark stalks along,  
Fraught with his woes indignant of his wrong.

See from yon infant's tomb, ascend to fight,  
A little form attir'd in purest white :  
She meets the mother bending o'er the tomb,  
And wailing her lov'd girl's untimely doom.  
' Hail to thy grief, the gentle vision cries,  
' Hail to those tears that trickle from thine eyes :

' Too



' Too feeling parent, mitigate thy pain,  
 ' Nor waste thy life beneath this gloomy fane:  
 ' Ah know, thy child with angels soars on high,  
 ' In the bright mansions of the upper sky,  
 ' And deck'd with wings that glitter to the ray,  
 ' Plays on the sun-beams of eternal day:  
 ' Pass a few years to Heav'n's dread will resign'd,  
 ' And thou shalt leave all sorrow far behind;  
 ' The bliss I now enjoy thou shalt obtain,  
 ' And ev'n Maria shall be thine again.'

At length o'erspreading the pœtic land,  
 Advanc'd the various allegoric band:  
 First on a flow'r-clad hill sublimely high,  
 Whose brow aspiring rush'd into the sky.  
 Hope with a cheering aspect took her stand,  
 A radiant pencil glitt'ring in her hand,  
 With this she colours the dark clouds that low'r,  
 And threaten man with rude misfortune's show'r.

Then



Then Celibacy came, in cloisters bred,  
A sluggish, shard-born form with dust o'erspread :  
Dead to the bliss that social life bestows,  
Dead to the bliss that from affection flows,  
Dead to the blandishments of female pow'r,  
He schools the priesthood in his iron bow'r.

Then Grace—the Hebe of the christian sky,  
With smiling lip and comfort-beaming eye!  
Th' angelic numbers from their thrones above  
Stoop'd to behold this object of their love :  
Thus the full host of stars in cloudless night  
Gaze on the earth from their ethereal height.

His meagre form now Disappointment rears,  
His cheek, deep-channel'd with incessant tears,  
Trailing, as still he treads the thorny plain  
Of blasted hopes, the long immeasurable chain.



Now Conscience enter'd on the trembling scene,  
 And to the bad disclos'd her with'ring mien :  
 But chiefly when the death-watch strikes the ear,  
 This dread recorder of the past draws near :  
 Ere sick'ning *Gertrude* fell to death a prey\*,  
 (Tradition still repeats the moral lay)  
 To goad the bosom of that impious dame,  
 To the pale suff'rer's couch prompt conscience came,  
 Like a dire necromancer skill'd to raise  
 Th' accusing ghosts of her departed days!  
 Her lab'ring heart sent forth distraction's sigh  
 As on the priest she cast th' imploring eye :  
 Then to the cross (while tears her bosom lave)  
 The kiss of terror, not of love, she gave :  
 Now yielding to th' access of wild despair  
 She shrieks, and rends with savage grasp her hair :  
 Now to reflection's gentler pow'r consign'd,  
 Long plaintive tones denote her troubled mind :

\* Queen of Denmark and mother to Hamlet.



At length, sad spectacle of wrath divine,  
The high-born wretch expires *without a sign*†.

On the dire battle's late-ensanguin'd plain,  
Morality stood musing o'er the slain !  
Yet then the mourner rais'd her drooping head,  
And thus with sacred energy she said :  
' Here—where the fatal scenes of slaughter end,  
' Where hostile nations in dread union blend,  
' Where sleep the great, the daring, and the proud,  
' Amidst this silent solitary crowd,  
' Bid the young monarch quench ambition's flame,  
' And 'gainst his passions daring war proclaim.'

Thus came th' instructive allegoric train,  
To swell the triumph of the Scaldic reign :  
The Genius now beheld a ghastly crowd,  
Borne thro' the mid-air on the evening cloud :

† See Henry the VIth. the death of Cardinal Beauford.



The fable pageantry (when near) display'd,  
Th' unhallow'd form of many a horrid shade.  
Envelop'd in a robe of darkeſt hue,  
The half-exiſting phantom burſt to view;  
From out the robe a death's head ſeem'd to riſe,  
Thro' which tremendous glar'd two fulgent eyes.

\* He too of dreadful fame th' alarming ſpright,  
The unnam'd lonely wand'rer of the night,  
Whoſe ſhriek profaning the repoſe around  
Foreboded death to him who heard the ſound.  
With wings outſtretch'd the Gryphon next was ſeen,  
Half-eagle, lion-half, a form obſcene:  
To theſe th' innumerable hoſt adjoin'd  
Of ſhapes uncouth, the tyrants of the mind,  
Matchleſs in force, and ſplenetic of mood,  
The family of death, and terror's brood.

\* The whiſtler ſhrill that whoſo hears doth dy.

SPENSER, Canto 12. B. 2d.

The time has been my ſenſes would have cool'd to hear a *night-ſhriek*.

MACBETH, Act 5th. Scene 5th.

The



The moon now launching on th' expanse of night,  
 Exulting sail'd amidst a flood of light ;  
 Along whose beams (diminutive of size)  
 A ship aerial glided thro' the skies :  
 Which as it rode resplendent from afar,  
 Assum'd th' appearance of a shooting star !  
 The playful Gossamer supplied the sail,  
 Swell'd by the pressure of the panting gale :  
 The deck was peopled by a sprightly band,  
 The little progeny from fairy land !

The scene now chang'd—The mountain heav'd a groan,  
 The bending forest breath'd a fullen moan :  
 When lo three Lapland hags, self-poiz'd on high,  
 Of hideous aspect struck the wond'ring eye !  
 Their implements of art aloft they bear,  
 And (like the low'ring cloud that loads the air)  
 They spread the texture of the fatal loom,  
 While grim night blackens to a deeper gloom.

G

These



These forms were welcom'd, as they pass'd along,  
 By savage howlings of the wolf-dog throng.  
 Disastrous ravens to this group repair,  
 And bats, the fiends that haunt the darken'd air;  
 And owls the group pursue with heavy flight,  
 Prophets of woe, and harpies of the night;  
 And they who 'midst the storm exulting soar,  
 And they whose talons reek with infants gore.

See from their height the haggard shapes descend,  
 And to the ocean's shore their footsteps bend;  
 Where cavern'd deep in conclave dim they dwell,  
 There utter the dread curse, there breathe the spell,  
 Hostile to man, their machinations frame,  
 And act the unhallow'd *deed without a name*.

Thus have we sketch'd with faint, imperfect hand,  
 The forms that peopled the poetic land,  
 Aerial forms (by glowing fiction dress'd)  
 Who rais'd to joy, or aw'd the human breast.

At



At length these visions fading on the sight,  
 \* A new creation rose at once to light;  
 As from a gulph the new creation sprung,  
 On which the classic beams their splendor flung;  
 While on the land which late we wander'd o'er,  
 Where wild invention watch'd her growing store,  
 Where (thro' rich vales) with swelling farges bold,  
 The flood of poetry resistless roll'd!  
 O'er which the glist'ning rays of fancy play'd,  
 And near whose banks the human passions stray'd,  
 On this rude scene of wonder and delight,  
 In evil moment rush'd eternal night.

\* The university of Copenhagen was founded by Christien, who died 1481.  
 Mallet's History of Denmark, vol. VI. p. 443.

T H E   E N D.



[1848]

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